

EVACUATION OF [NHA TRANG RVN] MARCH/APRIL 1975

WHEN I ARRIVED AT THE OFFICE ON ____ MAR 1975 [CAPTAIN WINSTON] ASKED ME IF I WOULD GO TO [NHA TRANG] AS TEMPORARY [SCR AS E. G. ADAMS] WAS ABSENT ON LEAVE. THERE WAS TROUBLE EXPECTED AT [DANANG] AND SOMEONE WAS NEEDED AT [NHA TRANG] TO COORDINATE [COMMO, TRAFFIC, ETC. BETWEEN SAIGON AND DANANG.] I RETURNED HOME FOR MY SUITCASE AND DEPARTED BY AIRCRAFT FOR [NHA TRANG] ON MY ARRIVAL, I CHECKED INTO THE [PACIFIC HOUSE.]

[THE CON GEN AT THIS TIME WAS PROCESSING THEIR VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES FOR EVACUATION TO SAIGON. MOST OF THESE PEOPLE HAD ARRIVED FROM OTHER PLACES, I.E. PLEIKU, KONTUM, ETC. THEY WERE BEING TICKETED AT THE CON GEN BUILDING.]

THE NEXT DAY DANANG STARTED TO EVACUATE AND THE CITY PANICKED. [CAPT. BURKE] WAS AT DANANG AND HAD [3 OR 4 CHOPPERS.] I SPENT THE NEXT 2 DAYS TRYING TO GET FUEL AND RADIO RELAY [FOR THE CHOPPERS AT DANANG] WE HAD TO KEEP [2 VOLPARS] IN ORBIT TO RELAY FROM [BURKE] TO ME AND I RELAYED TO [SAIGON.] THE CON GEN AT DANANG, [MR. FRANCIS] HAD BEEN ON BOARD BURKE'S CHOPPER BUT WHEN THEY LANDED AT [MARBLE MOUNTAIN] THE CON GEN GOT OFF AND TALKED TO THE VIETNAMESE REGION COMMANDER'S AIDE. THE CON GEN TOLD [BURKE] THAT THE REGION COMMANDER WAS GOING TO COMMIT SUICIDE AND HE, THE CON GEN, HAD TO GO TO HIM. THE CON GEN DEPARTED IN A VIETNAMESE CHOPPER. THIS LATER CAUSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN AT THE U.S. EMBASSY UNTIL THE CON GEN FINALLY GOT A MESSAGE THROUGH THAT HE WAS SAFE ON BOARD A SHIP HEADING SOUTH. [THE CHOPPERS WERE SHUTTLING TO CU LE RE ISLAND.] I SENT A STEEL FUEL CONTAINER WITH 500 GALLONS OF

JP TO THE [ISLAND BY CARIBOU.] THE FIRST NIGHT OF THE DANANG FALL, PASSENGERS CAME [INTO NHA TRANG BY CHOPPER AND FIXED WING.] ONE FRENCH TEACHER HAD BEEN PICKED UP BY CHOPPER AND MOVED TO THE ISLAND. [HE CAME TO NHA TRANG BY VOLPAR.] I INTERVIEWED HIM ALONG WITH A CBS PHOTOGRAPHER WHO HAD BEEN ON BOARD [MR. DALY'S WORLD AIRWAYS 727] HE GOT OFF AND COULD NOT GET BACK ON. HE SAID HE RAN TO THE TOWER AND CALLED FOR HELP. ONE OF OUR CHOPPERS LANDED AND PICKED HIM UP. I PUT THESE PEOPLE ON A FLIGHT TO [SAIGON.]

THE SECOND DAY WE WERE REQUESTED TO SEND THE CHOPPERS BACK TO [DANANG] TO LOOK FOR THE [CON GEN] ALSO AN [A40B] CUSTOMER WAS ON BOARD A BARGE AT [DANANG] AND WAS REQUESTING WATER BE DROPPED AS THE VIETNAMESE ON THE BARGES HAD NO FOOD OR WATER. I ASKED FOR A [CARIBOU AND A40B SENT PLASTIC CONTAINERS FROM SAIGON.] THERE WAS ONE DROP MADE WHICH I BELIEVE WAS UNSUCCESSFUL AS THE CONTAINERS BROKE ON IMPACT WITH THE WATER. THE NEXT DAY ANOTHER ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO DROP WATER, THIS TIME CANTEENS TIED TOGETHER WITH FLOATATION. THIS ATTEMPT ABORTED DUE TO HEAVY RAINS IN THE AREA WHICH APPARENTLY SOLVED THE WATER PROBLEM TO SOME EXTENT. [THE DANANG CON GEN LATER ARRIVED AT CAM RANH BAY AND WAS FLOWN TO NHA TRANG. HE HAD A LONG TALK WITH MR. SPEARS, THE NHA TRANG CON GEN AND THEN DEPARTED FOR SAIGON BY VOLPAR.]

AT [NHA TRANG] THERE SEEMED TO BE A SENSE OF PANIC BUILDING UP. EVERYONE SEEMED TO BE TENSE. I CAME OUT OF THE PACIFIC HOUSE TO GO TO THE AIRPORT ON MY SECOND MORNING AND A MOB HAD MATERIALIZED IN FRONT OF THE [CON GEN GATE] ALL WANTING

TO BE MANIFESTED [TO SAIGON] WHEN I SAW THIS, I RETURNED TO MY ROOM, GOT MY SUITCASE AND FROM THEN ON I SLEPT AT THE AIRPORT.

I WAS CONCERNED ABOUT FUEL AS ALWAYS. THE FUEL TRUCK WOULD STOP SERVICING AT THE FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE. I CALLED SAIGON FOR EMPTY DRUMS WHICH THEY SENT, HOWEVER, THEY WERE TOO DIRTY AND COULD NOT BE USED AS WE HAD NO WAY OF CLEANING THEM. I THEN REQUESTED FUEL DRUMS FROM THE [CON GEN] HE GOT SOME FOR ME AND WE STARTED FILLING THEM FOR LATER USE. I THEN STARTED TRYING TO FIND A PLACE TO STORE FUEL FOR USE BY THE CHOPPERS IN CASE WE LOST OUR FUEL AT [NHA TRANG] THE [A40B] REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE TOLD ME THAT HE HAD A PLACE NEAR [CAM RANH] AT THE [PROVINCE CHIEF'S COMPOUND] WHICH WAS THE MOST SECURE PLACE POSSIBLE. I STARTED DISPATCHING CHOPPERS WITH FUEL DRUMS. WE GOT 20 DRUMS THERE IN THE FIRST DAY. THE NEXT DAY THE FIRST CHOPPER ARRIVED WITH FUEL AND THE "SECURE" PLACE WAS ABANDONED. THE FUEL COULD NOT BE LOADED BACK ABOARD CHOPPERS SO WE PLANNED ON USING IT ASAP. WE USED ABOUT 3 DRUMS AND THE OTHER 17 DRUMS WERE STOLEN.

AT THE TIME I MOVED TO THE AIRPORT I CALLED IN THE TEN EMPLOYEES AND RECOMMENDED THEY SLEEP AT THE AIRPORT. THEY ALL MOVED IN AND PAGE GAVE ME MATTRESSES AND SHEETS. THEY ALSO GAVE US C-RATIONS AND OTHER CANNED FOOD. I SENT [MANNY] DOWN TO PICK UP THESE ITEMS. [THE CHOPPER PILOTS WERE ALL SLEEPING AT THE PACIFIC HOUSE.] I PLANNED ON BEING ABLE TO FLY DOWN TO THE [CON GEN PAD] AND [PICK UP THE CREWS] IN CASE OF TROUBLE.

ALL THE TIME I WAS [A NHA TRANG] WE WERE DISPATCHING ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT NOT NEEDED AND ALSO EMPLOYEES AND THEIR DEPENDENTS. THIS WAS HAMPERED BY THE [CON GEN] NOT ALLOWING ME SPACE ON THE AIRCRAFT. I FINALLY STARTED GETTING AN AIRCRAFT FOR MY OWN USE.

THE FOLLOWING EVENTS OCCURRED ON THE DAY THAT [NHA TRANG] WAS EVACUATED AND NOT NECESSARILY IN THIS ORDER:

1. WOKE UP AT ABOUT 5:30 AND CALLED TO THE PACIFIC HOUSE TO SEE IF SOMEONE COULD BRING COFFEE AND BREAKFAST.
2. [A40B CUSTOMER] ACROSS THE WAY CAME OVER AND TOLD ME THE VIET CONG WERE ONLY ABOUT 12 MILES UP THE ROAD AND THE EVACUATION WAS GOING THIS DAY. HE SAID HE WAS NOW DESTROYING HIS PAPERS AND EQUIPMENT. HE TOLD ME I COULD HAVE ANYTHING I NEEDED. HE WAS GONE BY 10:30 AND ABANDONED HIS OFFICE AND WAREHOUSE.
3. THE [CON GEN] HAD NOT INFORMED ME OF THEIR PLANS TO EVACUATE. I GOT A CALL AND THEY ASKED ME TO GET ALL AVAILABLE AIRCRAFT FROM SAIGON. THIS I DID AND ALSO REQUESTED A [C-46] FOR MY OWN USE.
4. VIETNAMESE STARTED ARRIVING AT THE AIRPORT LOOKING FOR RIDES. I WENT OUT AND PUT A NEW LOCK ON THE AAM GATE AND LOCKED IT AS THE GUARD WAS NOT ON THE JOB.
5. I PREVIOUSLY HAD REQUESTED BARBED WIRE TO HELP CONTROL CROWDS. I NEVER RECEIVED THIS WIRE. WE PLACED CHAINS ACROSS TO KEEP VEHICLES OUT OF THE OPERATIONS AREA.
6. THE POL DRIVER TOLD ME THAT HE WAS ON HIS LAST TRUCK

OF GAS AND WOULD NOT BE GETTING ANYMORE. HE SAID HE WOULD STAY ON THE JOB UNTIL ALL FUEL WAS GONE IF I WOULD PROMISE HIS FAMILY A RIDE TO SAIGON. I DID THIS AND HE WORKED AS HE PROMISED.

7. A MOB HAD GATHERED BY THE TIME THE FIRST AIRPLANE ARRIVED. THEY WERE ALREADY GETTING UNRULY. I TALKED TO SOME VIETNAMESE MARINES WHO SPOKE ENGLISH. THEY WERE ARMED AND WERE THERE TO GET A RIDE TO SAIGON. THEY AGREED TO STAY AND CONTROL THE CROWD IF THEY WERE PROMISED A RIDE. THEY STAYED ALL DAY AND DID AN OUTSTANDING JOB. LATE IN THE AFTERNOON, HOWEVER, THEY LEFT UNANNOUNCED AND ALL CONTROL WAS GONE. [DC-6S OF BIRDAIR CAME IN ALL DAY.] WHEN ONE WAS ON THE GROUND I WOULD CALL IN A [C-46] AND LOAD COMPANY CARGO AND PAX. THIS WORKED MOST OF THE DAY.

8. VNAF HELICOPTERS STARTED DEPARTING. TWO HAD A MID-AIR JUST ABOVE THE GROUND AND CRASHED INTO THE REVETMENTS.

9. HAD TWO VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES WHO DID NOT WANT TO GO TO SAIGON. I BORROWED MONEY AND PAID THEM THEIR FINAL PAY. ONE WAS A MALE RADIO OPERATOR AND THE OTHER WAS [THE ONE-ARMED CLEANING WOMAN.] ALL OTHER EMPLOYEES AND DEPENDENTS WERE SENT TO SAIGON.

10. I PUT THE FINANCE RECORDS INTO THE BAGGAGE COMPARTMENT OF A HELICOPTER. THIS INSURED THAT WE WOULD NOT LOSE THEM.

11. TWO DAYS BEFORE, I SURVEYED THE ROOF OF THE [PACIFIC HOUSE] FOR A CHOPPER PAD. THIS WAS PREPARED BUT ON THE

DAY OF EVACUATION THE VIETNAMESE BREACHED THE FENCE AND CROWDED THE ROOF PAD SO IT WAS ONLY USED FOR A COUPLE OF TRIPS. ANOTHER PAD HAD BEEN PREPARED IN THE PARKING LOT AT THE [CON GEN] THIS WAS USED ALL DAY WITH ARMED U.S. MARINES CONTROLLING THE MOB.

12. TWO TIMES DURING THE DAY WHILE AAM CHOPPERS WERE SHUTTling PERSONNEL FROM THE CON GEN PAD TO THE AIRPORT I MADE THE CHOPPERS SHUT DOWN AS OUR MOB AT THE AIRPORT WAS GETTING ENORMOUS. EACH TIME MR. SPEARS BECAME FRANTIC AND CALLED ME TO HAVE THE CHOPPERS KEEP SHUTTling AS THE MOB AT THE CON GEN WAS GETTING UN-CONTROLLABLE.

13. CHOPPER PILOTS REPORTED SMALL ARMS IN DIFFERENT AREAS OF THE TOWN. ONE REPORTED THE PRISON GATES WERE OPEN AND THE PRISONERS WERE LOOTING THE PRISON. I COULD HEAR FIRING FROM DIFFERENT LOCATIONS ALL DAY.

14. VNAF AIRCRAFT STARTED SHUTTling MILITARY AND THEIR DEPENDENTS ACROSS THE RUNWAY FROM AAM. THIS FINALLY SPILLED OVER TO OUR OPERATION WHEN VEHICLES FULL OF VIETNAMESE STARTED COMING TO OUR AIRCRAFT FOR RIDES.

15. AIR VIETNAM QUIT COMING INTO THE CITY DUE TO THE MOBS SO HUNDREDS OF VIETNAMESE CAME TO OUR END OF THE FIELD. THIS COMPOUNDED OUR ALREADY ENORMOUS PROBLEM.

16. THE LAST [2 DC-6] AIRCRAFT CAME IN AND WERE COMPLETELY MOBBED. I HAD A [CARIBOU AND C-47] SNEAK IN WHILE THEY WERE ON THE GROUND. THEY WERE COMPLETELY MOBBED. I GOT ALL THE EMPLOYEES LEFT ON THE [CARIBOU] AND DECIDED

IT WAS TIME FOR ME TO GO. THE MECHANICS PULLED ME INTO THE DOOR AS THE MOB WAS TRYING TO HOLD MY LEGS. AS THE AIRPLANE WAS TAKING OFF I SAW HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE WALKING DOWN THE TAXIWAY TOWARD AAM.

17. A FLYING TIGER [DC-8] WAS DISPATCHED FROM SAIGON. HOWEVER, BY THE TIME HE ARRIVED OVERHEAD [NHA TRANG] I WAS AIRBORNE AND MY OPINION WAS THAT IT WAS UNWISE FOR THE [DC-8] TO LAND. A 14 FT. STEP HAD TO BE FOUND FOR PEOPLE TO BOARD AND THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE TO DO WITH THE HUGE UNRULY MOB.

18. ONCE DURING THE DAY JUST WHEN A [DC-6] WAS LOADED AND TAXIING FOR TAKEOFF, THE TOWER SAID THE FIELD WAS CLOSED. IT WAS DETERMINED THAT SOMEONE IN SAIGON HAD ORDERED THIS. THE FIELD WAS LATER OPENED AFTER REPEATED CALLS TO SAIGON.

19. WE GOT OUT ALL OF OUR EMPLOYEES AND MOST OF OUR IMPORTANT PARTS AND EQUIPMENT.

20. THE VIETNAMESE RADIO OPERATOR AGREED TO STAY ON THE JOB AND CALL US WHEN POSSIBLE. HE CALLED ONE TIME THE DAY FOLLOWING THE EVACUATION AND SAID THAT EVERYTHING WAS QUIET DOWNTOWN AND AT THE AIRFIELD. WE NEVER HEARD FROM HIM AGAIN.

IT IS MY OPINION THAT ALL THE EVACUATIONS AAM PARTICIPATED IN WERE CAUSED BY THE EMBASSY PERSONNEL ORDERING VIETNAMESE EVACUATED, THEREBY CREATING PANIC AMONG THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE.

[CAPTAIN EDWARD REID, JR.]
AIR AMERICA, INC.